Depot Town Rag

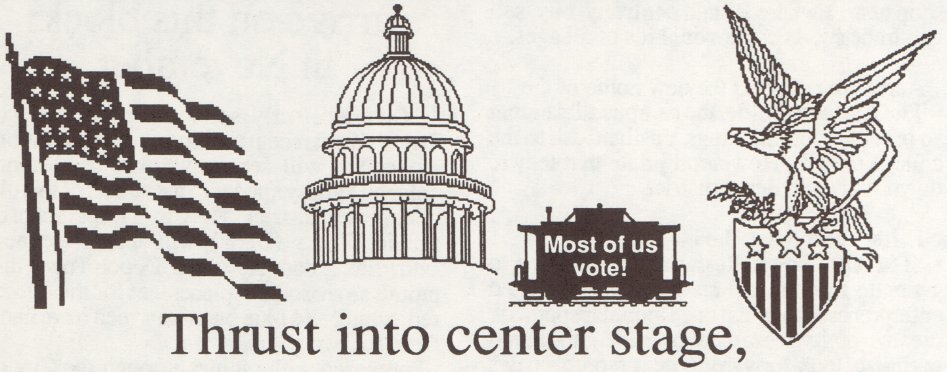
Volume 15, Number 11 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

100% FREE
Rag Content
November 1992

- Victoran Holiday plans
- New Year Jubilee
- *Business up-date*
- **Bullet train in 20 years?**
- Early meeting this month!

and other strictly local stuff. . . .

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198



Thrust into center stage, Depot Town provided the authenticity for this month's Presidential election

All of a sudden, during this year's Presidential election campaign, Ypsilanti's tiny Depot Town community has been thrust into the limelight and many local citizens are wondering what happened to the district's sleepy, backstreet style of anonymity.

First off, many were surprised to see Presidential hopeful Pat Buchanan creating a photo opportunity and press conference with Jack Miller's splendid antique Hudson automobiles as a backdrop. Cynics among us suggested that this pretender to the Republican nomination might want to be seen with authentic American automobiles in his entourage.

More liberal believers were equally surprised to find the block standing in center stage of the political arena once more on Cable News Networks' program in October entitled: "Promises, Promises: The Candidates and the Economy."

That hour-long send-up saw folks getting haircuts at Ike's Barbershop, picking up their Saturday morning veggies at the Farmers' Market back in the Freighthouse, and sitting around drinking coffee and arguing. It was almost like a home video, except the cameras were held steadier.

There was former City Councilmember Chuck Soule gabbing with Antique Engine Clubber Bob Kruse right on national television. So, too, were our neighbors who worried about their family security when the Willow Run plant closes. And, right after the Ypsi locals said their piece, Washington big-wigs and professional analysts tried to make sense of it all and get us ready to make a choice in the November elections.

Frank Sesno, CNN's anchor for the show had said, "The city is varied, diverse and, at least we think, provides a great cross-section of small-town middle America." It looked a lot like the "Heartbeat of America" commerical that General Motors filmed here two years ago and our friends and neighbors looked natural, honest and friendly on the national cathode ray tube.

Since the CNN program was the second in a four-part series they call "Democracy in America," many have suggested they film the next two parts here in Depot Town, as well. Part Three could show local committees hassling each other about the proposed toxic incinerator in Augusta Township and such mundane items as the renewal of the Ypsilanti Recyling Project contract with the City. Part Four, which would possibly run longer than the hour alloted, might moderate a session between City and Township minions moving toward a merger which would better serve all the citizens, whether they want their opinions on TV or not.

Democratic candidate Bill Clinton holed up at a local hotel in an effort to swing the Michigan vote andsome were disappointed that he didn't show up at the Farmers' Market in a pair of overalls with a pumpkin in one hand. But the Radisson was finally recognizedas being in Ypsilanti.

As so much of our country moves toward condominiumized malls and the paving over of history, the tastemakers seem to want to create another image of America - which looks an awful lot like Depot Town. In fact, it looks exactly like Depot Town.

An early motto in the block was, "Depot Town *is* what America *was*!" Maybe we should update that to, "Depot Town is what America wants to think it still is - or would like to be again!"

Naaaaah! That's too long to really sell in this month's highly politicized atmosphere.

Collectibles and TOY SHOW/SALE Sunday, November 22 in the Freighthouse

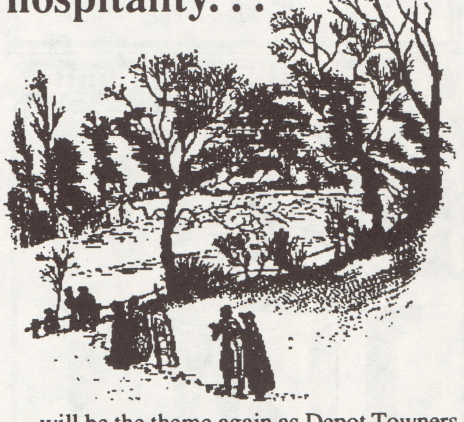
J&R Trading Post's Jerry Tillman has put together another unique extravaganza which calls out all those who collect, buy and sell collectible things for kids. The pre-holiday show will feature "timeless toys" in the form of antique toys, obsolete toys, sports cards, character toys and much more. Dealers and exhibitors will convene upon Depot Town from a wide area to show and sell their specialties.

Featuring a raffle every hour, the event opens to the public at 9am and runs through 5pm. Rental spaces are available through her shop (483-5870) in 8' X 10" spaces at $40 or 5" X 8" spacesat $25 each.

General admission for the Toy Show/ Sale is $1; children under twelve are free.

J&R Trading Post's most recent event was the promotion of the sidewalk sales on the first Saturday in October which complemented the Fall Fair events around the Farmers' Market and the Market Plaza.

Old fashioned hospitality. . .



. . . will be the theme again as Depot Towners greet visitors at the entry to the Riverside Park's Festival of Lights on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Call 482-6371 to volunteer to help continue this warm winter tradition.

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Dateline: Depot Town:

New kids on our block this month include several exciting installments in the Heritage Square Building next to the Cross Street Bridge at the western edge of this business district. On the site of the old Druebell Flour Mill and in the building which once housed Anderson & Deck's auto repair, you'll find:

- **Depot Town Counseling Center,** nearest the declevity and bridge, has enlarged their offices to stretch from front to back of that unique riverside location.
- **The Mickie Lawrence Knit Studio** fills the labarinth of rooms and studios at # 13 where knitted goods are created and sold to the industry.
- **B-J's Sports Cards** are now found in the shop at # 11 where BJ and company buy, sell and trade sports cards with kids of all ages.

Across the street is the new home of the

- **The Eastern Guide,** the campus slicker that so proudly touts all things Ypsilanti-ish to the college crowd. How appropriate that they're down in the old depot district.

Farther east down the block:

- **The Old Town Restaurant** continues to generate rumors and speculation as excited entrepreneurs tour that once-popular spot with dreams of its ressurection. Neighborhood optimists look forward to next month's news when a new owner may be able to announce an opening date. [See Re/Max' ad on the back page.]
- **River Artworks** at #48 East Cross is experiencing plenty of attention as building and business owners cooperate on a spiffy interior remodel with new walls, lights and showroom. The newly built cornice in the showroom looks so authentically correct in this block, and only astute old observers will know how new it really is.
- Next door at # 48 is the newly created **Richard Reid's Hair Station** which will feature six operators, two nail technicians, a colorist and one specialist in permanent waves. The interior has been entirely remodeled this past month. Richard is the owner of the building and lives on the top floor.

Colorful "Snowflakes" arrive on this block in November

October's early snow storms beat Depot Town's most recent promotion to the draw, but November will see snowflakes of a more colorful variety appear in the streets of this old commerical district. The City's Department of Public Works (DPW) will install the new 'snowflake' banners on in Depot Town this month as seasonal replacement for the former red, white, and blue banners which have hung there for two years.

Purchased with monies through the City of Ypsilanti and will the cooperations of the Depot Town Downtown Development Authority (DDA) which is supported by a majority of the district's private properties, the promotional banners are a small part of a long list of public improvements made here in the past three years.

Since the first banners appeared, City and DDA-financed improvements have included park benches, tree plantings, the replication of the 1893 Crossing Guard Tower, entry signs, the directory kiosk, and many other public projects which had long been awaited, but not possible until the DDA came into being.

In the last two months the Depot Town DDA has been reactivated -- with a strong show of support and enthusiasm from City elected officials.

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Please include me among the members of
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Annual dues:
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- o $10 Associate Member (Interested in and supportive)
- o $100 Life Member (A great deal if you had joined in 1976!)
- o Please place my name on the monthly mailing list of *The Depot Town Rag*
- o Don't mail *The Rag*. I'll pick it up in the neighborhood.
- $ Clip and send check to "Depot Town Association" c/o The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

'Bullet' to shoot through by the year 2010

Watch for 'progress' to approach on a very fast track through this sleepy little railroad district at the end of the century when an up-to-100 mph passenger train roars through Ypsilanti on its way from Detroit to Chicago and St. Louis, Missouri, six times each day. The federal government has announced the development of an Amtrak 'bullet train' to be operating on this line by that time, along with the completion of a new depot in the city of Detroit.

Back in 1913, landscape architect Frederick Law Olsmsted recommended the installation of a raised grade crossing at Ypsilanti's depot so as not to interfere with the street crossings. Maybe we'll see raised tracks on trestles going through the neighborhood by 2010. Such urban landscapes created by 'elevateds' in New York and Chicago could be commonplace in Depot Town if this plan takes form.

Railroad officials have noted that many of the urban tracks currently will not tolerate such high speeds, nor will the local governments permit them. Amtrak's top speed is currently 79 mph with an average speed of 52 mph on the Detroit/Chicago run. Today's city speed limit of 35 mph considerably slows the passage of both freight and passenger trains. A 'bullet train' might change all that — or drastically change the district's landscape. Optimistic planners hope that any change of scenery would happen by intent, rather than by accident. Meanwhile, Depot Town building owners are checking their foundations while residents straighten pictures on the walls - jiggled these past 160 years by the slower-moving steam and diesels roaring through.

November events in the Freighthouse

10 Tuesday
West Entry follow-up meeting

15 Sunday
Concert
Ypsilanti Recreation Dept. series

19 Thursday
Antique Engine Club
Monthly meeting,
new members always welcome

20 Friday
Antique Auction
by Steve Gross and Tom Schmidt

21 Saturday
Market Economy Bazaar
Everything under $10

21 Saturday
8-11pm **Contra Dance**
In cooperation with the
Detroit Country Dan ce Society
$5 admission

22 Sunday
Toy Show/Sale

27 Friday
Antique Auction
by Steve Gross and Tom Schmidt

28 Saturday
Serenity House Dance

29 Sunday
Concert
Ypsilanti Recreation Dept.series

Promotional ideas come from EMU study group

Sometimes it takes a whole new committee with no baggage from the past to see what kinds of promotion can really be effective in this old block. That's what a creative study group from Eastern Michigan University thought when they spent some time in the old depot district and brainstormed on ways to promote activities and interest around these Victorian Italianate commercial buildings.

Vic Chasen's group presented an exciting list of possibilities to DTA president Dave Blackmer last month -- and here's a sampling of some of those ideas that will bantered around in the Old Caboose in coming months:

- **A northern Mardi Gras**
- **The Doo Dah Parade** with close-order lawn mowers and other creative marching groups
- **A Western-Style shoot-out** at our own O.K. Corral
- **Murder Mysteries** a' la Agatha Christie
- **Model Train** shows and trading expos
- **A Fire Engine Muster**
- **Scavenger Hunts**

. . . and the expediting of all this would be for class projects at EMU.

Sounds like an awful lot of fun for college credit but, then, where else could you find a more suitable stage, willing audience, and appreciative public?

Watch for their ideas to become more operational as the winter meetings continue.

Still more neat stuff we'd like to see down in Depot Town:

- Big bands
- A dance hall
- Fancy ladies in broad-brimmed hats
- Train stops at the depot
- Model trains to fill in between
- Horse-drawn carriage rides
- A London double-deck bus shuttle to the hotels and conventions
- A town clock that has "Depot Town" embossed on it's face
- Post Cards of local scenes that still look authentic
- Film outlet and specially marked 'vantage points' for great local scenes
- Gallery of resident artists from the studios upstairs -- maybe even *in* those lofty locations!
- Street sculptures
- Park benches and other street furniture all winter long

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Merchants' Committee to be revived?

New DTA hours to be tried out in November

"How can the activities of the DTA be made more open to new participants?" That's a theme that is brought up at the beginning of nearly every fiscal year and October's meeting in the Old Caboose was no exception.

Some of the Same Old Gang were thrilled to see Dynamic New Regulars in the past two months but, even with these great new faces, some good ideas for the promotion of the block were abandoned for want of committed leadership and resonsibility.

"Maybe we could meet at more convenient times," said one of the S.O.G. who already had too much food on his plate.

"We used to have merchant meetings in the mornings at the Old Town, but the Old Town's closed now, and nobody here can meet that early, anyway," said another S.O.G. member.

"I can only meet in the mornings if we start at 6am," enjoined one Morning Person who starts her job at 7:30.

"Perhaps we could just meet an hour earlier, and miss dinner right after work to ruin the whole evening," said one of the D.N.R.s.

"Why not go back to the seperate meeting of the Merchants' Committee?" proposed another S.O.Ganger. "That was real effective for this first two meetings we had. Then there were only three of us left and we stopped meeting after the third session."

Much muttering was heard at the other end of the Caboose from a group who had been working since early that morning, opened their shop, drove the kids to meetings, made dinner, attended *this* meeting and hoped to be home before 10pm.

"We certainly have enough ideas and projects to go around," agreed others.

Then they decided to meet an hour earlier next month, just to see if any new cooperators would show up and tell them what a good idea it was to share some of the neighborhood promotional fun.

Next DTA meeting:
6:30 pm, Thursday, November 19, 1992 at the Old Caboose.

New district businesses to be featured in kiosk/directory update

With the influx of several new businesses to the depot district in the past few months, the nearly-new directory at the north end of the crosswalk needs to be brought up to date again.

At a cost of only $17.50 per plate, directory tags will be created and installed before the holiday crowd starts milling down the street to inspect the holiday window displays.

New business owner/managers must leave correct spellings of their venture with DTA president Dave Blackmer at Miller's Ice Cream Parlor & Emporium before December first in order to be included in this vital updating process.

Depot Town Association, Inc., 15 October 1992

DTA: Firmly rooted in the past - with a clear view forward!

The minutes of the September meeting were approved as published.

Treasury holds $1567 with new Associate Memberships arriving each week. More ten dollar member/interesteds are always welcome (see membership application form with this issue).

Farmers' Market manager, Gary Urick, reported on the revived West Entry Project. Advisory meeting on the proposed addition will be held Monday, October 26 and a follow-up meeting Tuesday, November 10 to investigate and recommend.

A three-month Freighthouse calendar was also presented (see item in this issue).

Jazz sponsorships are possible through Benson & Hedges, says Steve Gross, and he expects to see some Heritage Festival support for next year's jazz events, as well.

Victorian Holiday still seeks a general chairperson for its December 5 parade and a herd of llamas has already been contracted for the annual event. Several pledged their assistance. Discussion as to how to organized what has been called the World's Shortest Parade prevailed without conclusion.

Parks & Recreation director Amy McMillan seeks a formal statement from DTA on policy for parking cars on Frog Island at Heritage Festival. Will DTA wish to compete for the parking concession? Art at the Freighthouse schedule will be firmed up next Monday. Festival of Lights will run from Thanksgiving weekend through New Year's Eve, capped by the New Year Jubilee. A Community Development Block Grant is being sought for sewer repair in Riverside Park; if awarded, may interfere with next Heritage Fest.

City Recreation Supervisor Bruce Roff presented the plan for October 29 Hallowe'en Hoopla in the Freighthouse, and in the street. Volunteers and business support are appreciated.

The City Parks & Recreation Department has finished planting 107 trees this season. Hooray for the Greens!

Governor Clinton will be campaigning at the Radisson Resort this weekend.

A recent study by an Eastern Michigan University group/class offers ideas and people power for special events to promote a happy life in Depot Town (see item in this issue). Vic Chiasson offers dynamic and creative leadership in this area.

Old Business:

Kiosk (directory) signs will be replaced at new merchants' cost of $17.50 each, via the DTA. Requests for inclusion must be left with president, Dave, at Miller's Ice Cream Parlor & Emporium before December 1st.

District Library support proposal has been withdrawn, due to the miserable condition of the Association's finances at this time.

The Ark says, "It's in the mail," but the long-overdue payment has still not been received.

Little response came to president Dave's request for ideas, problems, and suggestions for the coming year's programs. Next DTA meeting will be held an hour earlier (6:30pm, Thursday, November 19) just to see if it makes any difference in attendance.

Tower landscaping money is available for spring planting, with an outside chance of getting the shrubs in the ground before the first snowfall.

Caboose repair bids are sought for the cupola, siding and doors, platforms and ends. Four interested contractors known to be interested are being approached for bids by Gary McKeever.

Snowflake Banners are in and ready for hanging in place of the present banners. Bill French will contact Mike Veasy to see additions. DPW will hang them soon.

Art at the Freighthouse may be cut back to a December event, only. Sandy Hoag expressed the need for up-dating the district map/directory.

Motion passed unanimously: "That the Depot Town Association does to approve parking of automobiles on Frog Island for the 1993 Heritage Festival."

New Business:

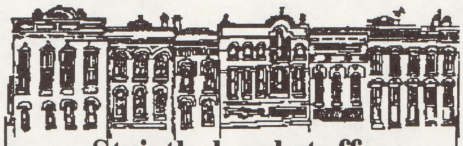
New Year Jubilee promotional materials are out and the event will be unique and welcome (see items in this issue).

Flower boxes were criticized once again: Should they be different next year? What about seasonal blooms and/or vines? Could we find somebody to maintain them for us? Someone ought to call the County. No action.

Farmers' Market Advisory Board is active once again and Gary McKeever will continue to serve as a DTA representative. Pam Hamblin will replace Paul Fetters as the other representative.

Rag Report: One new sponsor/advertiser joins the pages this month.

A trophy was presented to immediate past president A. William French: A brass-framed drawing of the replicated Crossing Guard Tower reading, "Your Leadership is a Monument to the Community."



Strictly local stuff:

November 1992

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Depot Town Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 19
The Old Caboose

Depot Town Antique Engine Club
7:30 pm, Thursday 26
Freighthouse Coffeeshop

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.
-Tom Dodd, editor

The Depot Town Association, Inc.
David Blackmer, president
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A schedule of events:

Saturday, 5 December

Farmers' Market and Christmas Bazaar
Carriage rides
Caroling groups
Santa in the Caboose
Open houses
Story-telling around the tree

Sunday, 6 December

Art in the Freighthouse
Carriage rides
Santa in the Caboose
Tableaus at the tree
Open houses

Festival of Lights starts it all off . . .

Riverside Park's Festival of Lights will run from Thanksgiving weekend through New Year's Eve. Depot Towners will act as greeter/ hosts at the gate on Christmas Eve.

New Year Jubilee will cap the season in Ypsi

All of this community activity comes to a dramatic finalé on New Year's Eve when the New Year Jubilee rambles all over town and brings much of its celebration to a culmination at the Freighthouse out beside the tracks in Depot Town.

An alcohol- and drug-free New Year's eve celebration, the multi-event will feature a variety of continuous entertainments throughout the evening at such varied sites as St. Luke's Church, downtown's Mack & Mack Building and the Freighthouse.

Families, singles, teens, children and seniors will be able to enjoy the Jubilee events.

Entertanments feature folk singers, dance bands, story tellers, comedians and many other art forms offered at the primary sites. Businesses, churches and other establishments located in the Jubilee vicinity have been invited to host their own events. Food and beverages will be available at numerous locations throughout the evening.

Activities begin at 6:00pm and conclude with the midnight ceremony in Riverside Park to close the annual Festival of Lights.

Participants will purchase a New Year Jubilee badge which will allow them to attend any event [with a possible additional charge for a major entertainment act currently being booked. Watch the December *Rag* for more detailed information.] The badge cost will be in the $5-$10 range per person.

To learn more about New Year Jubilee and to volunteer, contact Community Partnership at 484-6620.

Last year the Santa's Parade and Street Dance drew many celebrants despite the bitter cold

Victorian Holiday expands to fill the weekend, merges Lights & New Year's

December 5 & 6 to kick off the season at the depot

There won't be a parade & stredt dance this year, but Santa will get to Depot Town, nonetheless! Remington/Walker's Sandy Hoag and Daily Grind's Tommy Steele have joined their talents and high energies to coordinate this year's weekend event to kick off the holiday season. True to the usual style of this old neighborhood, the holiday won't really be observed until it's actually *the month of December*, even though it seemed that Santa arrived at some malls right after the Fourth of July. Saturday and Sunday, December 5 & 6, will see this old Victorian commercial block return to the style and flavor of its original days with a flurry of winter holiday events.

Merchants will petition the City of Ypsilanti to close Cross Street and place the plaza's gazebo in the center as a gathering place for such highlights as community caroling. Hoag and Steele and their planning committee envision uninterrupted street strolling from Rice Street to Ninde Street for the the two days of inside and outside activities.

Saturday's Farmers' Market will feature the annual and spectacular **Christmas Bazaar** of holiday craft items and decorations and plans are in the works - hopefully - for a neighborhood skating pond in or near the Market Plaza.

Depot Town shop windows will be judged late Saturday night with "appropriate awards" made the following morning. Emphasis is, as usual, on things home-made, Victorian, and with special appeal to children. The judges will continue their tradition of creating a category for every participant and window decorators are urged to be highly creative and good humored for these special holidays.

The Freighthouse will see 'tableau vivants' of **artfully lighted holiday scenes** presented by a variety of dramatic groups and individuals in the community. Traditional storytelling will take place for all ages around the giant Christmas tree in the Freighthouse on both days.

Horse and buggy rides are planned, once again, to carry the days' visitors around the district in elegant and traditional style. Often these liveried drivers can be encouraged to take a circle through Riverside Park once the Festival of Lights comes on in the evening.

Art in the Freighthouse, the first in what is hoped to be a series of juried art shows, will kick off that Sunday, featuring dozens of Michigan's most talented artists.

Santa, as usual, will be at his throne in the Caboose, meeting with kids of all ages to hear their plans for the holiday and to promise his efforts to keep the tradition going in their homes and families around town.

All participants, shop owners, residents and friends of Depot Town are encouraged to stroll the streets in near-**Victorian costumes** for the two days and the smell of roasted chestnuts and spiced teas will waft from door to door on Cross and River Streets.

Open houses in many of the district's shops and businesses will continue the tradition of welcoming their old customers and meeting new ones on Saturday or Sunday; some on both days. While many send out formal invitations to their regular and loyal customers, all are open to anyone dropping by on these festive days, as well. It's a great time to taste cookies, sip punch, take advantage of holiday specials and get in out of the cold with warm friends and happy smiles.

Traditonal strolling is probably the truly unique item on the calendar of old-time activities. All of these events presuppose one given fact: that people get out of their recliner chairs alk up and down the sidewalks to participate. It's a tradition that has been effective down in this district for more than 160 years. Happy holidays to all of today's New Victorians!

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Announcing:
Art at the Freighthouse
Gallery shows of Fine Arts
• Sunday, December 6
Co-sponsors:
Ypsilanti Parks & Recreation Department
Depot Town Association
Ypsilanti Visitors & Convention Bureau

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Auto Electric
307 North River • 483-1238

A Depot Town SAMPLER

Ancient district at the doorstep to tomorrow

• Mini-video cameras record the comings and going of the old railroad district as we warm ourselves by a pot-bellied stove.

• Transistorized pocket telephones keep us in touch with folks coming to the area for an old fashioned concert in the park.

• Computer-driven automobiles carry tourists down the block to watch a parade of farm work horses pulling wooden wagons.

• Plans are in the works to bring super-sonic rail transportation to shiver the timbers and bricks of the Nineteenth Century depot district that helped to develop the West of America.

• A mega-congolmerate continues its steady progress to develop farm land into a site for the burning of toxic wastes while the neighboring township prohibits new residential septic tanks.

• Even this folksy neighborhood's monthly newspaper is created by a computerized word processor and laser printer.

Depot Town - nay, every neighborhood in the world, today - stands at the edge of a new technology that could, concieveably, change how and why we live on this planet.

Still, every day sees folks bringing a new generation to the old neighborhoods like Ypsilanti's depot district to explain that, "this is how things used to be."

Public relations firms work overtime to create scenarios for the consumption of its consumers which will lead them to conclude that yesterday's values are still found in our society, but they seem to have to look farther every year for recordable and believeable images.

Sometimes we wonder what the next generations will bother passing on to the newcomers. "Why, when I was a boy, we used to have to walk clear across the living room just to change the television channel! Sometimes through five feet of snow!"

Such early winter weekends can cause us to reflect upon the solid uniqueness of our position in history and wonder at the district's future. Could these be the 'good old days' sooner than we had planned?

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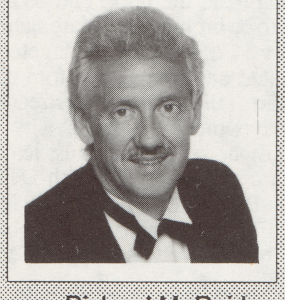

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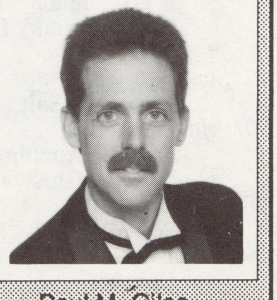

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